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ABSTRACT

The Rural Education Subcommittee of the Elementary and Secondary Education Task Force presents findings related to needs of rural education in the United States. Recommendations directed toward the U.S. Office of Education are cited in the following areas: early childhood education, elementary and secondary education, summer programs, occupational preparation, guidance and counseling, and adult and continuing education. Attention is given to rural problems as related to staffing, community involvement, and civil rights. Additional recommendations focus on the distribution of Federal resources, school reorganization, regional service agencies, and rural communities. A list of members of the task force is appended. (AL)

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REPORT OF TASK FORCE

ON RURAL EDUCATION

Miriam Carliner, Chairman

United States Office of Education

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INTRODUCTION

Educational deficiencies in rural areas are of national concern for two major reasons: they have an impact far beyond the boundaries of the areas in which they occur and they handicap a sizable proportion of the Nation's population.

Poorly educated rural residents have, in recent decades, migrated in large numbers to urban centers, carrying the virus of their educational handicaps with them. The resulting concentration of poorly educated, ill-trained citizens has been a major contributer to the problems of the cities.

Despite the current national commitment to quality education for all regardless of race or class or place of residence, rural youths still are not receiving the kind of education which they require for full participation in today's and tomorrow's society.

This report is an attempt to analyze some of the problems confronting rural schools and to suggest ways and means by which they can be overcome. Insofar as possible, the Task Force has attempted to focus its recommendations on these problems which stand in the way of achieving equity in educational services available to rural communities. The Task Force has deliberately avoided discussing general educational improvements in programs and services which are needed by all the Nation's schools.

Most of the deficiencies in rural education stem from a combination of problems associated with personal poverty, community isolation, limited public services, lack of leadership, and the concomitant of these factors - insufficient taxable

resources to support educational services and programs which are available in other parts of the country.

The recommendations, if implemented, should go a long way toward achieving a number of goals for rural education:

1) Equalization of opportunity, through improved course offerings and the extension of education to both pre-school children and adults; through more and better qualified staffs; through adequate facilities, materials and supplies; and through expanded technical assistance to rural communities by the Office of Education.

2) Improved research, experimentation, evaluation, and development of new practices through the establishment of regional education agencies and a National Center for Rural Education; and through a unit to be set up in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare which would coordinate and stimulate Federal programs pertinent to rural education.

3) Fiscal and organizational reform through the redistribution of funds based on the incidence of poverty and other factors affecting the schools' financial need; and through the reorganization of school districts into agencies of optimum size.

4) Increased relevance to educational needs and fuller community participation in education through the modernization of the rural schools' curricula and through the development of closer rapport between the schools and the community.

Elementary and Secondary Education Task Force

Rural Education Subcommittee

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Appendix A: Task Force Membership

I. BACKGROUND

In recent years, the Nation's attention has been focused on the cities. Yet, in 1965, the latest year for which data are available, almost three in every ten Americans - 55 million of them - lived in rural areas.[1]

Definition

How do we define "rural"? Although the concepts of rural and urban are not discrete, the Census Bureau has defined the rural-population as those individuals living in the open country or in communities of less than 2,500 people. In developing Federal policies for dealing with rural education, we may also include that population which is living in small towns and in low-density communities in and outside large metropolitan areas. Two additional facts: Only seven percent of all Americans lived on farms at the time of the 1960 census. Over three times as many rural people lived off the farms as on them.[2] Clearly, rural and agricultural are not synonymous.

Incidence of Poverty

While differences in definition result in different statistics, it is generally agreed that about 10 million of our rural people are poor and that these constitute one-third of the Nation's economically disadvantaged.[3] As the President's National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty pointed out in The People Left Behind: "Rural poverty is so wide spread and so acute as to be a national disgrace, and the consequences have swept into our cities violently....Rural poverty is acute in the South, but it is present and serious in the East, West and the North...."In short, it is scattered throughout our country. Most of

the rural low-income groups are white, but poverty is particularly acute among the white of Appalachia and the Ozarks, the Negroes of the South, and the Spanish speaking and Indians of the Southwest. It especially affects agricultural migrants, the share croppers, farm laborers, and rural industrial workers.

In metropolitan areas, one out of every eight is poor; in rural areas, it is one out of every four. Families living on farms are, on the average, the poorest: they have only half as much money as do rural non-farm families. For non-farm rural families in 1959, the median income was 84 percent of the national median; for farm families it was only 57 percent.[4]

Unemployment in rural areas is much greater than in the rest of the country. Rural underemployment also is heavier than the national average, due, in large part, to the seasonal nature of much of the available work. Using 1960 Census data, the Department of Agriculture estimated, for example, that underemployment among rural farm persons was over 36 percent.[5]

Community Resources

Rural poverty is a problem of major proportions which affects the individual as well as the community in which he lives. The larger the community, the more readily available are its social services. Conversely, the poorest, most isolated communities have the fewest services, at the highest per capita cost, although they are least able to pay for them. Migration to the cities of young adults in the productive ages has left behind a large proportion of those in dependent categories, including children as well as the aged. The needs of these groups are great; their resources are limited.

The relative isolation of many rural communities, their prevailing cultural level, their relative population decline, their scarcity of local leadership, their inadequate tax base, their economically irrelevant political boundaries, their shortage of well trained personnel and their resistance to change have, in effect, conspired to keep public services inadequate: schools are poor; transportation is often unavailable; and health and social services are frequently nonexistent.

The shortage of resources is illustrated in a number of ways. For example, in a recent housing survey it was found that only half of all rural homes - and only 11 percent of those inhabited by nonwhites - were in sound condition, with complete plumbing.[6]

In the area of health, the data illustrate what is generally true for all kinds of rural services: they are greatly inferior to those in the cities. Only twelve percent of this country's physicians, and eighteen percent of the nurses, serve rural areas.[7] Large metropolitan centers, in 1962, had 195 physicians, rural areas had only 53 per 100,000 population.[8] Another statistic: in 1961, four percent of the country's mental health clinics provided services in rural areas, and only two percent of all clinic manhours were expended on rural children.[9] The Hill-Burton Act, in building hospitals, met some of the most critical needs for hospital beds, yet isolated rural counties still have only half as many general hospital beds per 1,000 population as do metropolitan areas.[10]

Recent government efforts have not had sufficient impact on rural poverty. Over $740 million of the Office of Economic Opportunity's expenditures between

November, 1964 and November 1965, for example, were allocated to urban programs, compared to about $222 million going to rural projects. Rural expenditures for community action programs for fiscal 1968 constituted 24 percent of CAP funds. If Head Start is excluded, they amounted to only about 19 percent of total CAP spending.[11] The Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations pointed out that "many of the poorest 100 counties, measured by per capita income, have not been reached by programs of the Act. In contrast, most of the richest counties, on the same per capita basis, are participating fully in the program." All of the poorest counties were rural.

Clearly, greater efforts and new organizational patterns and strategies must be found to bring adequate services to America's rural communites.

Educational Deprivation

A larger proportion of rural youths is disadvantaged than is the case for those in the city. Community services available to them, as illustrated above, are greatly inferior to those for young people in the rest of the country. Schools are the one public agency which touch the lives of most families, yet rural education suffers from all the problems which beset other rural institutions. "Rural adults and youth are the product of an educational system that has historically short-changed rural people. The extent to which rural people have been denied equality of educational opportunity is evident from both the products of the educational system and the resources that go into the system. On both counts, the quality of rural education ranks low."[12] As one U.S. Commissioner

of Education pointed out, "The problem in rural education is in some respects like urban education. In some respects it is a very special one...It is not purely a rural problem to be solved by rural people only. What happens in rural communities affects all of America. Urban people have a vital stake in the education of rural children..."[13]

The results of poor schooling have been clearly reported by the President's National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty. According to the report, "there were more than 700,000 adults in rural America in 1960 who had never enrolled in school. About 3.1 million had less than five years of schooling and are classified as functional illiterates. More than 19 million had not completed high school...In 1960, the average years of schooling for the urban population 25 years of age and over in the United States was 11.1. This compared with 9.5 years for rural nonfarm and 8.8 years for rural farm people. Only 11 percent of the rural adult population had any college education compared with 19 percent of the urban population. While rural youth are getting a better education than their parents, the level of educational achievement is still lower than for urban youth. Twenty-eight percent of rural nonfarm youth and 23 percent of rural farm youth aged 14 to 24 in 1960 dropped out before graduating [from high school]. This compares with 21 percent for urban youth. Not only do rural students drop out sooner, but the percentage of those who go to college after completing high school is much lower than for urban youth. In 1960, about twice as high a proportion of urban as rural youth were enrolled in college."[14]

II. EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS

What steps can be taken to improve rural education so as to make it appropriate for those students who will remain in the rural community as well as for those who will migrate to urban areas? The following pages will indicate some of the critical needs as well as a number of recommendations regarding possible action by the Office of Education and by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education, including kindergarten programs, is frequently not available to the rural child. For the country as a whole, accessibility to kindergarten is in direct relationship to community size. In 1968, 71 percent of five-year olds living in central cities were enrolled in kindergarten, but in non-metropolitan areas, only 56 percent of them were.[15] Non-public preschool programs have been available for middle class children for a long time, but they are too expensive for the poor. Head Start has provided such an experience for young children, but has reached too few of them, for too short a time, and in many cases has failed to be coordinated with the regular school program.

In recognition of the crucial role which early childhood learning plays in the development of children, it is recommended that nursery schools and kindergartens be made universally available and that the Office of Education further such a development, including the provision of funds. Those rural school systems which have no kindergarten need to be encouraged to establish such programs and, where State legislation does not permit this, to obtain the

necessary legislative consent. Where kindergartens already exist, rural communities need help to develop preschool programs; to find the necessary personnel and facilities; and to coordinate the new programs with other public school activities.

The Department of Health, Education and Welfare and the Office of Education should take a number of steps to bring about the expansion and improvement of early childhood education: disseminating information about existing programs; emphasizing early childhood education at the forthcoming White House Conference; making consultants available to small rural communities; and fostering relationships between interested school systems and pertinent departments in nearby colleges and universities. More should also be done to assure a close relationship between Head Start activities and the public schools, even in those communities where no Follow-Through program has been established. Programs for parents of preschoolers should be an essential part of a meaningful early childhood education. The Department should make sure that parental involvement exists in all early childhood programs for which it provides funds. In the Office of Education, ESEA Title I and Title III guidelines, which require parental involvement, should be enforced through expanded program monitoring by the State departments of education.

Elementary and Secondary Education

Rural schools generally need to be helped toward giving more attention to disadvantaged students. This means more individualized instruction, counseling by well-trained personnel, and a curriculum which is pertinent to the pupils' needs, experiences, interests and expectations.

The schools need to collaborate with other organizations which in the past have tended to concentrate their efforts on the more affluent members of their communities. Such organizations include the various national farm organizations as well as other State and local, public and voluntary groups.

Closer cooperation between elementary and secondary schools needs to be fostered in order to case the students' transfer from one level to the other. Once in high school, the students' integration into the larger student body needs to be achieved through a number of measures. Foremost among these is the development of understanding and acceptance by the teachers of all students and a curriculum which will equip the dropout-prone with basic academic skills as well as a realistic preparation for the labor market.

Relevant curricula, responsiveness to the students' needs, and adequate training in academic and marketable skills, all help to keep young people in school. For most of the young people leaving school before high school graduation, dropping out is not a sudden occurrence but is the culmination of a long drawn-out series of events. The process is related, among other factors, to the schools' failure to involve the students' families in their children's education, to the absence of a sufficient number of well-qualified teachers, guidance and other service personnel, and to the lack of awareness by school administrators, school boards, and community groups of the urgency of the problem.

The Office of Education can help foster the necessary changes in rural education. Its recent efforts in providing technical assistance to rural Title I, ESEA programs are a good beginning. These efforts should be expanded to include other

federally supported education programs. The assistance being given to State education agencies under Title V of ESEA should also be strengthened.

Summer Programs

The typical rural community has no organized summer activities of either a recreational or academic nature. Where State funds have been available for summer programs, they have tended to go to the cities. Summer programs funded by Title I, ESEA also are more common in urban than in rural school systems. In order to foster the development of summer programs in rural areas, it is recommended that a student summer corps be created by the Office of Education or by the Department. As members of the Corps, urban high school and college students can be brought to the country for summer programs which would combine academic tutoring with cultural enrichment. The Office or the Department would achieve high visibility through the creation of such a corps of high school and college students devoted to service in rural areas.

Occupational Preparation

For students who are not going to college, job preparation is a must. Yet, few of those not going to college receive any vocational training in high school. For the young in rural areas, the job situation is complicated because many rural youths reaching working age must leave their communities in order to find employment.

Rural youths, to begin with, must learn to live in places where they have not grown up. In school, rural students' exposure to occupational exploration

and guidance as well as to general and vocational education has frequently been irrelevant to present-day needs and certainly to those of the future. In rural high schools, vocational education tends to be limited to courses in agriculture and home economics. In many cases, rural students have been urged to enroll in vocational agricultural courses when economic opportunities in farming are steadily diminishing. Moreover, about 70 percent of the vocational agriculture enrollment is in production agriculture courses, although projected employment of farmers and farm laborers (production oriented occupations) for 1975 will be down 22 percent from the 4.1 million in 1965.[16] The Vocational Education Amendments of 1968 provide for broadening the course offerings in vocational agriculture to include agricultural mechanics, agricultural supplies, ornamental horticulture, agricultural processing and similar courses. The Amendments authorized sharp increases in Federal spending and provided for more aid to disadvantaged students as well as greater flexibility to reorient traditional training programs. Through the State departments of education, the Office should encourage rural school systems to move in the directions indicated by the Amendments. State departments need to be helped by the Office of Education to have rural schools extend vocational training into fields outside agriculture and home economics; to earmark some funds of the Vocational Education Amendments for nonproduction courses in vocational agriculture; and to foster counseling practices which guide students toward non-agriculture vocational training. Beyond this, local education policies which make the study of certain vocational agriculture courses compulsory need to be modified. The Office of Education and the State and local education agencies should make

every effort to ensure that program offerings are directly related to job opportunities.

In order to make high quality, diversified vocational education available in rural areas, more funds need to be made available by Congress. Meanwhile the Office of Education should foster the establishment of more regional vocational schools and the extension of financial and technical assistance. Multi-district schools would provide services such as relevant vocational training, occupational guidance, staff training, job placement, and coordination of distributive education and work training programs.

Part of a realistic vocational education should include the development of new careers, like those in the general areas of health, education, and welfare. Some of the human service occupations require relatively little formal training and would be particularly appropriate for disadvantaged youths with poor educational backgrounds. Skills acquired in training for such careers have the advantage of being marketable in rural as well as in urban communities. Courses for short-term training geared to available jobs, preferably supported by arrangements for job placement, should also be provided.

Occupational preparation should include on-the-job training, carried out by industry, while the schools should concentrate on other aspects of education. In rural areas, it is extremely difficult to achieve such arrangements because the rural community, by its very nature, tends to be distant to industrial installations. The Office of Education should foster the extension of co-operative

work experience programs to all rural communities where the existence of private industry makes this possible. Vocational education in the schools should be expanded and made flexible to avoid a narrow approach which training in a particular job situation may have.

The Office should expand its efforts in support of cooperation between the schools and industry, including incentives to industry for such cooperation. It should make every effort to get compliance with the guidelines it has issued regarding the placement of students in jobs directly related to their interests and career plans and the provision of academic work to support these interests. Such training should help rural students find jobs and create a pool of trained manpower which may bring new industry into the rural community. Work study programs such as the Neighborhood Youth Corps, which help students stay in school, need to be made an integral part of every rural school system.

Guidance Counseling

One of the rural schools' very great needs, in vocational education as well as in the more academically oriented elementary and secondary education programs, is for a larger number of counselors to help students make the transition from elementary to secondary school to college, from school to job, and from rural community to the city. More emphasis needs to be placed on having vocational counselors available to every student who will go directly from school to job. The Office of Education should foster a closer relationship than now exists between the schools and the public employment service. The U.S. Employment Service needs to establish offices in rural areas or make its services available to the rural communities on a part-time basis.

Adult and Continuing Education

In view of the fact that over one-third of all rural adults have had less than eight years of education: the Office of Education should help school systems eliminate illiteracy and lift the general education level among rural adults. Expanded job training and retraining programs, supported by other Federal agencies, should be part of any such effort. Rural institutions and agencies, including the churches, community organizations, industry, business, organized labor, and agricultural agencies should be drawn into the process.

III. STAFFING

The problems of rural education can easily be identified although they have received minimal attention from most Federal programs. The shortage of qualified educational personnel is the most crucial problem. Although some parts of the country are less severely handicapped than others, any comparison of staffing between urban and rural schools shows the latter at a disadvantage.

Rural schools have difficulty getting and keeping qualified staffs for a number of reasons. The low salaries, the isolation of the rural community in the face of the American emphasis on the urban way of life, and the frequently ingrown, traditionally oriented leadership, all contribute to the problem of getting and keeping a competent staff.

Extensive and deliberate efforts for imaginative recruitment, higher salaries, better basic preparation and in-service training, and for facilites, equipment and materials of instruction are necessary.

Out-Migration of Professionals

Teachers and other professionals living in the city do not wish to move to the country, and the more ambitious among those who start out in the rural communities often leave for the cities. One report is illustrative: A few years ago a U.S. Office of Education study of higher education in South Dakota discovered that only 39% of the State's college graduates entering teaching did so in South Dakota. There was evidence, also to indicate that many of the most competent were those who took their initial teaching assignments in Minnesota, California and New York. In order to stem the exodus of qualified personnel, an aggressive and systematic effort must be launched to recruit and challenge a greater proportion of our most competent and dedicated youth to prepare for teaching careers in rural America.

Salary Supplementation

The problem of staffing rural schools is similar to that experienced by inner-city schools. To attract and keep well qualified personnel, salaries need to be raised in both kinds of community, but higher salaries may have to be conditioned on teachers meeting certain educational standards. Federal funds should be channeled through the State departments of education for the specific purpose of salary supplementation. Hardship pay has been advocated in HR 514, a bill now before the Congress. The legislation seeks to overcome staffing problems in this country's inner cities. It needs to be amended in order to benefit poor rural communities as well - whose need for competent personnel is as pressing as is that of the urban school systems. In providing extra funds to rural

communities, care must be taken to avoid rewarding inefficiently small school systems which are able but unwilling to merge with other local educational agencies.

Supportive and Specialized Personnel

The shortage of well qualified, specialized personnel in the rural schools is even more acute than it is for teachers. Pupil personnel services in rural schools are often lacking and are generally inferior to those available in the cities. Where a school has guidance counselors, sorely needed because of the transitional character of much of rural life, they tend to see their job primarily in terms of the needs of the academically oriented students and to neglect the others until their problems reach crisis proportions. Other specialists, like psychologists, media specialists, speech therapists, and social workers, are rarely found in the typical rural school. Frequently, there are no staff positions for instructional supervisors and curriculum experts. Health services are limited and even a nurse may not be available. The Office of Education should expand its efforts under the Education Personnel Development Act to strengthen the quantity and quality of educational specialists in rural schools.

Such school systems also lack the necessary personnel to carry out longrange planning and to develop proposals seeking funds from Federal and foundation sources. Most rural schools do not have the funds to employ project writers. Any program which depends on or requires the submission of proposals or similar application for funds might well include provisions through which States can encourage and assist local and regional education agencies with the development of project proposals.

Teacher Education

School personnel in rural areas not only is inadequate in numbers but also in qualifications. Much of the present training of rural teachers takes place in small colleges which project an unexciting intellectual image and tend to be staffed with mediocre faculties. Although many competent and dedicated professors do settle in such institutions, the more ambitious and aspiring gravitate to the more prestigious institutions. It may well require a massive campaign on "rural virtues and way of life" as well as an improvement of facilities, cultural opportunities and salaries to attract and retain a larger proportion of high-quality staff in rural colleges. The Office of Education should include more faculty members from rural teacher training institutions in the personnel exchange under the National Teacher Fellowship Program.

The program calling for the creation of New Networks for Knowlege, authorized under Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965, is now under consideration by the House Appropriations Committee. It would provide for the development of small colleges through cooperative arrangements with established universities. The proposal should be fully funded.

In-Service Education

Opportunities for rural teachers' continuing professional growth and development through in-service education are even more inadequate than the preparation of future teachers. Teachers need to be given time and money for further training. Workshops, summer studies, and fellowships need to be provided. Although in-service programs will not solve the problems posed by the shortage of qualified

personnel, activities designed to improve and upgrade the competencies of those already employed should, if at all possible, be a component of every kind of program supported by the Office of Education. In-service training should also include leadership programs for school administrators and community groups which are involved in school affairs.

Relations with Institutions of Higher Education

Rural schools need to avail themselves of the resources of nearby colleges and universities for in-service training and extension courses and for other activities which can widen the cultural horizon of the typical rural community. Institutions of higher education should go to the communities in which they can play a productive role rather than wait for such communities to come to them. The Office of Education should require appropriate cooperative arrangements between rural school systems and institutions of higher education or other training agencies in programs which its funds are supporting. Under such arrangements, colleges and universities need to come into the local school systems and to involve teachers, administrators, boards of education and other lay people in the renewal of the rural schools.

The Community as a Source of Personnel

The community-at-large, including those not necessarily trained for educational careers, can also provide manpower for diversified staffing in rural schools. In addition to what is being done under the VISTA and Teacher Corps programs, much more vigorous efforts can be exerted to recruit and train lay people as paid paraprofessionals or volunteers. Such recruitment should take place especially among housewives, retired persons, and college students.

The training and utilization of local people in the rural schools might well lead to the building of an educational career for many individuals. Cooperation between the local schools and nearby teacher training institutions is essential in this process.

While the enabling legislation already exists in the Education Professions Development Act for projects leading to an expanded supply of well qualified personnel, the level of funding is far too low to meet the scope of the problem. A large proportion of the funding, furthermore, is urban oriented, so that rural schools again do not fare well.

Title VI of the Education Professions Development Act should be fully funded and expanded to provide support for training personnel in all education support roles, including teacher aides.

Personnel Information Center

To expand the corps of competent personnel for rural school systems further, the Office of Education should foster the establishment of a central mechanism which would bring together information on rural job opportunities all over the country, to be made available to those who may be interested in serving in rural communities.

Teacher Exchange

Intrastate as well as interstate teacher exchanges should be established to give rural staffs the opportunity of getting out of their small communities and at the same time to give urban teachers the opportunity of temporary rural service.

Here again, training to prepare teachers for service in rural or urban schools needs to be made part of every exchange program.

Facilities, Equipment and Supplies

The operation of effective school programs in rural areas requires, in addition to well qualified personnel, appropriate, adequate and accessible facilities, equipment, and supplies. To get these in rural schools frequently involves high per pupil costs although the small local educational agencies can ill afford to carry this burden. Consequently, rural students frequently do without adequate, up-to-date buildings, equipment and materials. Yet, these must be provided not only to serve pupils, but to satisfy and hold competent personnel. Some of the new technology can help solve certain personnel problems. But to make proper use of this technology, school staffs must be trained in its use. Institutions of higher education can help train and, on a cooperative basis, provide the personnel needed to make use of technological innovations.

Comprehensive Planning

What is needed, furthermore, is comprehensive educational planning, leading to the design of a relevant, innovative curriculum within which equipment and supply needs should be identified. Special categorical program for purchasing equipment and materials (ESEA II and NDEA III) should be replaced by provision being made for these purposes within other Federal programs as provided for under H.R. 5141.

Funds and personnel to perform the planning function are the first priorities which must be met by rural schools. The Office of Education should provide

assistance in this essential area by urging increased funding of Section 503 of Title V of ESEA, which provides for State assistance to local education agencies for comprehensive planning. The Office should encourage the States to assist rural as well as urban districts.

Cooperative Arrangements

The availability of adequate personnel, supplies, equipment and materials can be greatly augmented through the creation of cooperative arrangements among those rural school systems which individually are to small to provide these essentials. Cooperative ventures permit a number of school systems to pool their resources and share their services for the mutual benefit of all.

Cooperative arrangements can take a number of forms: each district contracts directly with the employee for a share of his time; interdistrict service contracts provide for the hiring of full-time staff, then contracts are signed with other districts for extension of staff services to their schools; or, service personnel is made available by the State department of education or an intermediate unit.

Regarding the acquisition and use of instructional equipment and materials, substantial advantages can accrue from cooperative purchasing and sharing by several local school systems. The Office of Education should work with State departments and local school systems to encourage such arrangements. Furthermore, it should finance the creation of regional centers capable of carrying out a variety of functions which individual school systems alone cannot perform. Such centers will be discussed in more detail in a later section of this paper (pages 37-40).

IV. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Since the schools and the churches are the only public service institutions in many rural areas, it is important that they make greater efforts to involve the community in school affairs and to tap new resources for the improvement of educational services.

To achieve a closer relationship between the schools and the citizens presents special problems in rural communities. Here the schools may be faced with a scattered population, with practically no public transportation, little indigenous leadership and with a history of individualism which frequently does not include the availability of social service nor the notion of direct social action.

Rural parents are beginning to demand a greater voice in the decision-making process affecting education, especially where Federal programs and funds are involved whose purpose it is to correct the deficiencies of the educational system. A significant percentage of the rural poor see the lack of education and educational opportunities as one of the basic causes of their own poverty. A number of studies bear this out.[17]

There are still many communities where apathy toward education remains. Here, as in other small towns and sparsely settled areas, the schools must devise means which will bring parents to them. And a special effort must be made to reach beyond the middle class to the disadvantaged families.

Citizens' involvement in the schools must lead to their support of institutions which are viable. Community groups organized to maintain or expand schools

and other social agencies which are too small to provide the necessary services would be regressive. Citizen participation must take place at the grass roots level, but it must be committed to cooperative action among several communities in support of institutions of optimal size.

Parent Information

In the first place, the schools must develop counseling programs which make a greater effort to establish rapport with parents and to apprise them of what goes on in school. Rural schools can draw from urban experiences which employ community workers who serve as liaison between the school and the home. The Extension Service of the Department of Agriculture might also be used as a model in its use of the county agent to work with the community.

Community Services

Secondly, the schools can become the place where programs for the whole community, but especially for the poor, are coordinated. The rural poor often are widely dispersed and for them the isolation from the outside world is particularly acute. In many cases, they are not aware of programs which might be of assistance to them and, even when they know of them, the poor are frequently reluctant or unable to avail themselves of such opportunities. In the urban ghetto, a child can walk to a playground or to a library; a mother may have easy access to a health unit. But in rural areas, services may not be so readily available. Schools, given more resources, can house within them adult education programs, health services, social work assistance, library programs, recreational projects and other services.

Where a school or a local school system is too small to provide community services, it should, where feasible, supply joint services with other schools or local educational agencies. In any event, schools should move toward becoming true community institutions which can coordinate a variety of functions which each community needs - in-and outside of education. Adult education, academic as well as occupational, should, of course, be an important part of each community school. Regional centers in rural areas, to be discussed in greater detail later on in this paper, could include an education extension service with a county agent and staff as part of its offerings.

Advisory Councils

In the third place, provision must be made for the active participation in the rural school of all parts of the community. There is no prototype structure for citizen participation which fits all rural areas. But local school systems should be encouraged to provide means for implementing Federal programs through which broader community participation, especially by the poor, can be achieved. Citizens' advisory councils provide such a vehicle. They should include citizens representing all socio-economic and ethnic elements in the community; they should be empowered to help determine children's needs, establish practical, attainable goals, and propose various means for achieving these goals. In view of the limited resources which are present in rural communities, it is important that groups not proliferate and that efforts at community involvement build on existing agencies such as those created by OEO's Community Action Program. It should be of central concern to the Office of Education that council members be broadly representative of their community and that the

councils have maximum representation by the poor. The success or failure of a citizens' group centers on full participation in it by the poor.

Funds have rarely been available to support citizens' advisory councils. It is recommended, therefore, that grants be made available from Federal sources to establish and train local advisory groups in rural areas to perform an effective job assisting in the planning and developing of local programs. The grants should be channeled through the State agencies to the local districts and be earmarked specifically for the activities of advisory councils. It is further recommended that the Office of Education make sure that locally kept records on spending patterns under federally supported programs be made available to local citizens' groups for their information.

Paraprofessionals

Yet another way in which the community can be drawn into the school is through the development of a program using volunteers and paid paraprofessionals in and outside the classrooms. As was indicated earlier in this paper, much more can be done by the rural schools in utilizing the barely tapped reservoir of people who can make a contribution to education in a variety of functions.

Liaison with Other Groups

There is a fifth area in which closer relations between school and community can be established. Through the involvement of non-profit organizations, such as the farmers' organizations, neighborhood groups, and others, and through closer liaison with private business firms and labor unions, the schools can be made more relevant to the needs of the rural population. The Office of

Education can contribute to making rural schools true community institutions through greater provision of technical assistance, liaison with pertinent other agencies, and the availability, to local groups and individuals in rural areas, of information regarding pertinent Federal programs. Such services are already being offered to a limited extent. They should be expanded. Where desirable, the Office can help State departments of education perform the service.

V. CIVIL RIGHTS

One of the problems which arises in rural areas is that of racial and cultural isolation resulting from various forms of segregation. The Department's present efforts in this respect consist mainly of enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the rendering of technical assistance, provided for under Title IV of that statute, to school districts seeking to desegregate. While these Federal activities deal specifically with issues of segregation and discrimination, the promotion of equal opportunities and the removal of disadvantages caused by segregation and discrimination should be basic considerations in the planning and implementation of all programs supported by the Office of Education. To this end the Office should make sure that each federally assisted project makes the maximum contribution to the elimination of isolation resulting from discrimination based on race, class, or national origin.

An expansion in the number of consultants made available by the Office of Education under Title IV of the Civil Rights Act to school systems seeking to improve their educational programs and planning to desegregate, is desirable.

VI. DISTRIBUTION OF FEDERAL RESOURCES

The Equalization of Fiscal Capacity

The great majority of States with large rural populations have fewer fiscal resources per child to support educational programs than does the average State. This is true regardless of the measures of income used. Personal income per child of school age is the most commonly used index of fiscal ability when comparing States. When this measure of ability to support educational programs is used, 29 of the 34 States falling below the National average are States having large rural populations.[18] The poorest of these predominately rural States has substantially less than half the ability to support educational programs than does the wealthiest State in the Nation.

This differential in ability to support educational programs is reflected in less than adequate facilities and instructional materials, a disproportionate number of unqualified teachers, fewer and less effective special services, and, ultimately, in higher dropout rates and less well prepared graduates. This has led, in part, to higher unemployment and underemployment rates and in turn to a slower growth rate of taxable resources.

The only mechanism that can be used to correct this fiscal disparity among the States is the taxing and spending authority of the Federal Government. Consequently, it is recommended that the Federal Government use its educational assistance payments to equalize fiscal resources for education among the States. The funds should be distributed in an inverse ratio to State personal income per child, with requirements that the States, in turn, redistribute the funds to compensate for intra-State income differences.

The sum of present Federal subventions for elementary and secondary educational assistance is moderately equalizing.[19] A number of formula changes could bring about greater equity although the sums involved in these distributions are not large enough to accomplish significant equalization of fiscal resources among the States. It is, nevertheless, recommended that the distribution formulas for Titles I, II, and III, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and Title V-A of the National Defense Education Act be modified to the end that State entitlements under these subventions be calculated in inverse proportion to personal income per child. Title III of the National Defense Education Act already incorporates such an equalization feature and might well be used as a model in this respect. However, matching provisions in this and in other formulas (with the exception of equalized matching provisions) should be deleted. Non-equalized matching provisions generally operate to benefit the wealthier States and districts which have the fiscal resources to match Federal funds without an undue fiscal burden.

Pupil Need Differentials

Inadequate fiscal resources represent only one need variable associated with rural areas--and which the Federal Government can take direct action to remedy by its distribution of fiscal resources. Another need differential which the Federal Government can act on is the educational need differential which can be associated with particular classes of children, e.g., the physically and mentally handicapped, those with health problems and the nutritionally deficient, the culturally disadvantaged, the non-English speaking, and the dropouts.

Every evidence indicates that children with these disadvantages are proportionately more numerous in rural and inner-city areas. Furthermore, educational programs which have shown some success in remedying their handicaps are generally more costly than regular school programs. Consequently, special account should be taken of such disadvantaged children in the distribution of Federal funds. It is recommended, therefore, that Federal subventions (except those targeted for special classes of pupils) for the support of elementary and secondary education include accounts of disadvantaged children with an appropriate cost weighing assigned such pupils. In addition, the States should be required to redistribute such entitlements on a similar basis of need. In the implementation of such a recommendation, it is important that an equal effort be made in rural areas to identify disadvantaged children as is made in urban areas.

The recent recommendation of the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations should be implemented to effect an amendment to ESEA for incentive grants to States which use school aid formulas reflecting higher per pupil costs for disadvantaged children. It is also recommended that the distribution formulas of Titles II and III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and Titles III and V-A of the National Defense Education Act be modified to incorporate such counts of disadvantaged children with appropriate cost weightings assigned to such counts.

Equal Service Overburdens

In operating educational programs, two cost overburdens are generally associated with sparsely populated areas: (1) those due to distances pupils must be

transported, and (2) those associated with small administrative units or schools. These costs can be referred to as "equal service overburdens" in that it costs more to provide an equal amount of a given service in sparsely populated areas than it does in urban or suburban areas. States have long recognized this fact and many have made provisions in their systems of school support to compensate sparsely populated school districts for these cost overburdens. The Federal Government should also recognize these cost overburdens in distribution of educational assistance. Consequently, it is recommended that the States be required to take account of such cost overburdens in the distribution of funds for the existing categorical aids as well as for any Federal general education aid program which might be enacted. Care should be taken, however, that these redistribution requirements not be used to reward or perpetuate inefficient school district organization or needlessly small schools within districts.

Equal Distribution of Office of Education Funds

Any program which depends on or requires the submission of proposals or similar application for funds should reserve a definite portion of the available monies for rural applicants. In connection with the Administration's budget proposal for educational program planning and evaluation, it would be extremely helpful if the funds would be distributed to the State departments of education with the stipulation that a substantial portion be spent in rural areas. The resultant planning should be coordinated with the economic development activities subsidized by the Housing Act of 1953 and being undertaken through the Governors' planning offices. Such coordination should be made an integral part of a long-range planning strategy for overcoming rural problems.

VII. SCHOOL REORGANIZATION

No aspect of State and local government has experienced more organizational reform than has the legal framework within which public schools are operated. The past two decades have seen a reduction in the number of basic school administrative units from nearly 84,000 to less than 20,000.[20] School district reorganization and school consolidation are probably the most significant accomplishments of this period throughout nearly all of rural America. And more can be expected. Reorganized districts and consolidated schools, with the help of fleets of school buses, have made a high school education accessible to many rural children who previously had to do without a secondary education. In general, newly consolidated schools have more diversified program offerings, a larger quantity of up-to-date instructional materials, laboratories and libraries, as well as better staffing.

However extensive the positive changes, schools in rural areas still have a very long way to go. With all the reorganization, 40 percent of the school districts have fewer than 300 children enrolled; 80 percent have fewer than 2,500.[21] Over a third of all children are attending schools in districts with fewer than 5,000 students.[22] These are almost all rural children. They attend school in districts far too small to offer a comprehensive educational program. An enrollment of 10,000 is generally considered the minimum for an effective school district. Yet, in the fall of 1967, only 46 percent of this country's public school children were in school districts meeting this standard.[23] School district reorganization relates primarily to the administrative structure. It does not

necessarily result in increased individual school size nor in increased services to small school units. It is necessary, therefore, to encourage the merger of individual schools as well as the consolidation of school districts.

There are many cases where small schools and small school systems could be consolidated if there were a will for such action. It may be unrealistic to expect these school districts to abolish themselves. State legislatures should "establish uniform criteria for the organization and administration of school systems" rather than merely pass permissive legislation.[24] Care must be taken, however, that a sense of community is preserved wherever consolidation takes place. The Office of Education should help State departments of education develop sample plans to show rural communities how to maintain their identity while reorganizing their school systems. The Office can also help State departments of education encourage small school systems toward consolidation. State departments should receive Federal funds so that they can provide technical assistance to school districts undergoing the consolidation process.

VIII. REGIONAL SERVICE AGENCIES

Multi-district organizations can provide some of the answers to rural education problems caused by sparse population, small school units, geographic isolation and an inadequate tax base. Regional agencies can serve larger student bodies and pool resources which a wider tax base or other source of income can supply.

Existing multi-district organizations range all the way from those providing purely planning mechanisms to those operating specific programs. Many are

single-county districts which only partly compensate for deficiencies caused by the size factors while others are large multi-county organizations. No one kind of regional organization is appropriate for every area.

A core of services should be available to each American child, youth and adult irrespective of the local community's ability to finance programs. Where individual local education agencies are unable to do so, regional centers, cooperatively using local, State and Federal funds, can result in improved educational opportunities for rural communities. Services which such centers may provide include those to children, teachers, administrators and to the community.

Services to children would include, among others, special education programs; vocational education and guidance; health and nutritional services; transportation; psychological and social services; and cultural enrichment.

Services relating to personnel would include recruitment, assignment, and supervision of the staff; curriculum development; the design of instructional materials and the provision of a wide variety of printed and audio-visual materials and equipment; and inservice training programs.

Administrative services would include comprehensive planning; research and evaluation of programs; the planning of school buildings; centralized purchasing; accounting; the writing of proposals for funding of programs; and the dissemination of information to professional and lay people.

Services to the community would include the promotion of greater parent-school participation programs, social services to families, cultural events, and adult education.

In order to promote efforts toward the creation of multi-district organizations, the Office of Education can provide valuable leadership and assistance in several ways.

Where potentially effective regional agencies do not exist and local school systems are too small to be effective, the development of a consortium of local districts should be a requirement to qualify for Federal funds. Necessarily existent small rural school systems which are unable to reorganize or to coordinate their activities with other local education agencies because of geographic distance and sparsity of population would be exempt from this requirement.

While it is probably not politically feasible at the present time for the Office of Education to require the establishment of consortia, the same result could be accomplished by setting minimum levels for grants from the Office, as proposed for Title I, ESEA, by the Secretary in his testimony of H.R. 5141.

The Office of Education should also consider granting funds to groups of rural school systems as an incentive toward the creation of cooperative arrangements among them.

State education agencies should provide the necessary leadership to help organize regional centers appropriate for a given State and should remain involved with

the new agencies' activities once they have been established. Where States will not foster the development of regional centers, such units should be encouraged as an upward extension of the local districts, rather than a downward extension, or administrative arm, of the State department of education.

In view of the shortage in rural school systems of highly specialized planning personnel, the Office of Education should provide greater technical assistance for rural program planning and development to State departments and multi-district organizations. In addition, funds should be provided for technical assistance to rural areas under Section 806 of ESEA Title V and Section 303 of the Vocational Education Amendments of 1968.

The Office should also provide monies to State departments of education under Title III and/or Title V of ESEA for the development of multi-district or regional agencies. Where Title III centers now exist, or where they will be established, Office planning should build upon their existence. Title III might be amended to provide continued Federal support of administrative costs for an additional two-year period.

The centers should involve institutions and individuals from all levels of education, including those from higher education. The centers should have liaison with the appropriate Regional Education Laboratories, with the Research and Development Centers, and with the ERIC Clearinghouses. Wherever possible, the Office should further the establishment of inter-State commissions concerned with education as well as economic development and related concerns. The

commissions could be jointly supported by Federal and State agencies. Title V of ESEA could provide some of the Federal monies for planning assistance.

FOCUS ON RURAL COMMUNITIES

In view of the difficulties which rural communities face and the relative shortage of resources which are available to them for the solution of these problems, there is an urgent need to reorient the Department generally and the Office in particular toward greater assistance for rural communities. A number of recommendations are hereby made which will strengthen the proposals presented earlier in this report.

Establishment of a Rural Unit

A rural unit should be established in the Department whose functions would include the following:

- To collect and disseminate information pertaining to developments in health, education and welfare relevant to rural needs; to publicize models which have been successful in providing services to rural populations; and to provide information regarding federally supported programs.

- To further the coordination of State, regional and Federal programs which serve rural areas.

- To initiate the "packaging" of programs for rural communities, drawing upon funds from various sources.

- To provide technical assistance to rural communities in the development and improvement of programs in health, education and welfare through a corps of specialists serving as consultants to State and local as well as to regional agencies in rural areas.

- To represent rural interests within and outside the Department.

- To stimulate land-grant and other rural institutions of higher education to conduct long-range research and development activities dealing with rural problems and to provide appropriate extension education to rural communities.

Creation of a Center for Rural Education

It is recommended that a center be created to conduct research and to design programs geared to the needs of rural education in the United States. The center would concern itself with all phases of rural education and would operate in cooperation with State departments of education, local school systems, colleges and universities and related institutions. The center would function in its respective area, in a manner comparable to that of the Center for Urban Education.

Allocation of Resources

As indicated earlier in this paper, it is recommended that programs administered by the Department and by the Office ensure the equitable distribution of funds to rural as well as to urban communities. In this connection, it is urged that demonstration schools which have been proposed be created in rural as well as in urban locations.

Composition of Advisory Committees

It is urged that care be taken in the selection of advisory committee members serving in various Department and Office programs so as to assure adequate representation by individuals concerned with rural problems.

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APPENDIX A

MEMBERS OF THE TASK FORCE ON RURAL EDUCATION

Chairman: Carliner, Miriam K., U.S. Office of Education

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